

PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY (PDT) and Blue Light Therapy

What is photodynamic therapy (PDT)?

In PDT a chemical called aminolevulinic acid (brand name Levulan Kerastick) is applied to sun-damaged or precancerous areas of your skin. The aminolevulinic acid (also called ALA) is allowed to penetrate for about one hour or longer. A blue light is used to activate the ALA and the precancerous cells are destroyed. The treated areas will be sensitive to light.

Do I have to do anything to prepare for PDT?

Bring a wide brimmed hat to your treatment, to wear when you leave the clinic.

What can I expect during therapy?

1. Your skin may be prepared with glycolic acid or alcohol.
2. A doctor or other caregiver will apply the ALA to your skin.
3. After about 1 hour, you will be given special goggles to wear. Then you will sit under a special blue light for up to 17 minutes.
4. During the treatment, you may feel stinging, tingling, prickling or burning. This is normal. Please tell your caregiver if the discomfort is severe.

After treatment:

- Stay out of the sun or bright light as much as possible.
- For two days after treatment, you must wear protective clothing and a wide brimmed hat whenever you are outside, in natural sunlight, or in bright indoor light.
- Sunscreens will not protect you.
- The treated areas will become red and swollen. They will scale and crust for 3-7 days after treatment. You may feel some discomfort, but no significant pain.
- The treated areas take 5-10 days to heal.
- Keep moisturizer or Vaseline on treated areas at all times until your skin heals.
- Some patients may need to be treated again in 8 weeks.

You should not receive this treatment if you:

- Are allergic to aminolevulinic acid (Levulan Kerastick)
- Have porphyria, lupus, or condition that makes your skin sensitive to the sun
- Take deferoxamine (an iron chelator)
- Take medications that make your skin more sensitive to sunlight/light
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding

Please call 612-467-5524, Monday – Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. with any problems you have after your treatment.

Responsible doctor: _____

Content approval: Dermatology Section

August 2004

VA Medical Center
Minneapolis Minnesota